



Rotary Alumni 1210 Books4Home project has expanded to include prisons in Staffordshire

The expansion to prisons began when the Sedgley and Wombourne Rotary Club's President and Youth Coordinator, Alan Jasper, who is also Vice-Chair of the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) at HMP Oakwood in Wolverhampton, learned that Alumni 1210 Rotary Books4Home had a surplus of adult fiction books. President Alan had been to collect further Rotary Books4Home to deliver to the five schools that receive RB4H via Sedgley & Wombourne Rotary.



President Alan explained that HMP Oakwood had recently launched a Reading Strategy and a new team of librarians from Staffordshire Library Services were very keen to try to make a positive difference to the men there. The average reading age of prisoners in England and Wales is eleven years. The Prison Libraries are always keen for further books and so Rotary

Books4Home were pleased to donate the surplus adult fiction books.

President Alan delivered the books to HMP Oakwood for the main Prison Library (and its satellites on the house blocks). As you would expect, they all have to be scrutinised, but they passed security checks and the team managed to get them through within a week. The librarians there were thrilled!

Prison Library Service Advisor Alan Smith, who is responsible for the service in the seven prisons in Staffordshire wanted to hear more. President Alan mentioned the work Rotary are doing in local primary schools with Rotary Book Boxes and they wondered if they could take the next natural step and have one located in the Visits Hall.

A Rotary Book Box was suggested for the Visits Hall at HMP Oakwood to allow children visiting their parents to read and take books home. The Prison Director, (Governor) Sean Oliver, supported the initiative and agreed to provide the Book Boxes at cost, with construction handled by HMP Oakwood's Wood Shop. Oakwood is a training prison and has a Wood Shop where the men produce a whole range of items including ... wood sheds. The Sedgley and Wombourne Rotary Club covered the cost of the first Book Box for HMP Oakwood.



Within a couple of weeks, the Book Box had been constructed, and Rotary Books4Home were provided to stock it. The project has been successful, with the first Book Box now operational at HMP Oakwood. Additionally, five more Book Boxes have been commissioned from Oakwood's Wood Shop for HMPs Featherstone, Brinsford, Stafford, Werrington and Swinfen Hall. The Staffordshire Prison Library Service will arrange transport for both the Book Boxes, and Rotary Books4Home.



This collaborative project involving Rotary, prisons, and their Library Service is believed to be a first, aiming to provide visiting children with the opportunity to choose a book with their parents, read it together, take it home and cherish it. So, creating a positive impact for families and promoting literacy in the community.



Alan Jasper, President 2024/25, Sedgley and Wombourne Rotary Club

